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APPROVAL OF UNDP ASSISTANCE TO A PROJECT OF
COSTA RICA

IPF:(1992-96) $4 400 000
(COS/92/G31) - Conservation of Biodiversity and Sustainable Development of the La Amistad Osa Conservation Areas

Date of approval by the AC:[1/]	28 April 1992
Expected duration:	Three years
Proposed executing agency:	Government
Government implementing agency:	State Cooperation Foundation (FUCE) Ministry of Natural Resources, Energy and Mines
Proposed UNDP contribution:	$7 995 000 Source of funds: GEF
Total UNDP budget:	$7 995 000

Project background

Costa Rica has been the scene of some of the most rapid and extensive destruction of species-rich, tropical forest biome in the hemisphere. Less than 20 percent of Costa Rica's original forest remains, as approximately 148,000 acres are cleared each year for agriculture alone. At the same time, Costa Rica enjoys one of the longest traditions of progressive conservation policies and legislation in the developing world. To date, Costa Rica boasts an institutional conservation system in which resource use is regulated, to a greater or lesser degree, in over 25 per cent of the country's total land area. National Parks and other strictly controlled areas alone account for 12 per cent of the country's territory. These areas embody an extraordinary range of ecosystems and species, including a great number found in both North and South America, as well as an exceptional number of endemics.

These two opposing tendencies (mounting recognition of the value of biodiversity conservation, resulting in the incremental expansion of the protected area system, countered by increasing forest destruction) have inevitably led to escalating pressure on the protected areas themselves. In 1987, to counteract the growing threats to Costa Rica's system of national parks, the Government proposed linking parks and protected area management to the economic needs of local populations as the principal means of assuring long-term biodiversity conservation. As a first step to achieving this, the Government created the National System of Conservation Areas (SINAC). Each Conservation Area which groups neighboring protected areas together with inhabited or exploited "areas of influence" to form a broader ecosystem management area, is headed by a Director who is responsible for park management and for defining, in partnership with local communities, how ecologically and economically sustainable activities can be identified and implemented.

The involvement of surrounding communities and other stake-holders in the planning, implementation and decision-making processes is critical for effective protection of

[1/] This Fact Sheet reflects the status of the project/revision at the time it was approved by the Action Committee; modifications to the project/revision may have occurred subsequently.

biodiversity. However, their commitment to conserving it will depend on their capacities to develop activities and employ technologies that offer an economic alternative to conventional resource use. Two non-destructive economic activities in Costa Rica, in particular - ecotourism and chemical prospecting - promise exceptional opportunities to generate income for biodiversity conservation and human development in the SINAC. The former - tourism - is the third most important source of foreign exchange for Costa Rica (US$ 193 million). Virtually all tourists to the country list the national parks as the principal reason for visiting, and nearly 40 per cent visit primarily because of the wildlife. However, since local infrastructure for eco-tourism is severely lacking, the proportion of earnings from this activity returning to SINAC and local communities is unnecessarily limited.

Chemical prospecting is the name given to the analysis of species for their pharmaceutical or biochemical properties. The importance of identifying new species cannot be underestimated. Sales of the drugs derived from the rosy periwinkle, found 30 years ago in Madagascar, now exceed $100 million (US) annually. The National Biodiversity Institute (INBio) is now collecting hundreds of species and, through agreements with specific institutions is analyzing their pharmaceutical potential. These agreements stipulate that a percentage of the earnings derived from drug sales must return to Costa Rica. INBio trains and employs local inhabitants as "parataxonomists" to locate and classify Costa Rica's wealth of species and to map their distribution for future use.

Description of project

The long-term objective of the project is to achieve effective biodiversity conservation by strengthening the National System of Conservation Areas (SINAC).

Project activities will include the production of:(a) a biodiversity research programme in each Conservation Area to identify biodiversity resources and determine their economic potential; (b) scientific research infrastructure; (c) a database and information system for improved planning and management of SINAC; (d) upgraded SPAN operational infrastructure in the Conservation Areas; (e) institutional personnel trained in project planning and management, protected area management, participatory community development methodologies, etc. (f) a series of small-scale, ecologically sustainable, economic projects in key regions of the Conservation Areas designed and implemented by community groups, NGOs, small-holders and micro-entrepreneurs; (g) tourism infrastructure located in key areas to attract and retain visitors; and (h) design of formal revenue generation and cost-recovery mechanisms to ensure that income from ecotourism and biodiversity research returns to bolster the sustainable development of the two Conservation Areas.

Inputs

UNDP will provide international consultants in ecotourism (four man-months) and the development of electronic monitoring and information systems (four man-months); a national coordinator (36 man-months); two conservation area coordinators (72 man-months); national consultants in biodiversity research (nine man-months), restoration ecology (seven man-months), fire management (six man-months), forest management (six man-months), marine resource management (six man-months) and legal contracts and concessions (11 man-months); subcontracts for the design and construction of operational scientific and tourism infrastructure; training in management, information systems, parataxonomy, ecotourism, and project formulation and administration; development, installation and monitoring of systemwide database and monitoring information system; a small grants programme; scientific, operational, and computer equipment; and miscellaneous costs.

Financial data

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Personnel	774 100
Subcontract	5 839 600
Training	4 400
Equipment	997 900
Miscellaneous	379 000
Total	7 995 000

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